

Schem. xxx II



MICROGRAPHIA.

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Observ. XLIX. Of an Ant or Pismire.

THis was a creature, more troublesome to be drawn, than any of the rest, for I could not, for a good while, think of a way to make it suffer its body to ly quiet in a natural posture; but whilst it was alive, if its feet were fetter'd in Wax or Glew, it would so twist and wind its body, that I could not any wayes get a good view of it; and if I killed it, its body was so little, that I did often spoile the shape of it, before I could thoroughly view it: for this is the nature of these minute Bodies, that as soon, almost, as ever their life is destroy'd, their parts immediately shrivel, and lose their beauty; and so is it also with small Plants, as I instanced before, in the description of Moss. And thence also is the reason of the variations in the beards of wild Oats, and in those of Musk-grass seed, that their bodies, being exceeding small, those small variations which are made in the surfaces of all bodies, almost upon every change of Air, especially if the body be porous, do here become sensible, where the whole body is so small, that it is almost nothing but surface; for as in vegetable substances, I see no great reason to think, that the moisture of the Aire (that, sticking to a wreath'd beard, does make it untwist) should evaporate, or exhale away, any faster then the moisture of other bodies, but rather that the avolation from, or access of moisture to, the surfaces of bodies being much the same, those bodies become most sensible of it, which have the least proportion of body to their surface. So is it also with Animal substances; the dead body of an Ant, or such little creature, does almost instantly shrivel and dry, and your object shall be quite another thing, before you can half delineate it, which proceeds not from the extraordinary exhalation, but from the small proportion of body and juices, to the usual drying of bodies in the Air, especially if warm. For which inconvenience, where I could not otherwise remove it, I thought of this expedient.

I took the creature, I had design'd to delineate, and put it into a drop of very well rectified spirit of Wine, this I found would presently dispatch, as it were, the Animal, and being taken out of it, and lay'd on a paper, the spirit of Wine would immediately fly away, and leave the Animal dry, in its natural posture, or at least, in a constitution, that it might easily with a pin be plac'd, in what posture you desired to draw it, and the limbs would so remain, without either moving, or shriveling. And thus I dealt with this Ant, which I have here delineated, which was one of many, of a very large kind, that inhabited under the Roots of a Tree, from whence they would fall out in great parties, and make most grievous havock of the Flowers and Fruits, in the ambient Garden, and return back again very expertly, by the same wayes and paths they went.

It was more then half the bigness of an Earwig, of a dark brown, or reddish colour, with long legs, on the hinder of which it would stand

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